



Charities USA

THE MAGAZINE OF CATHOLIC CHARITIES USA ■ SPRING 2015 ■ VOLUME 42 ■ NUMBER 2

CARING FOR
GOD'S CREATION

REAUTHORIZING
CHILD
NUTRITION
PROGRAMS

OUR
VOLUNTEER OF
THE YEAR
FINALISTS

BOUQUETS
OF HOPE

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Catholic Charities USA is the national office for one of the nation's largest social service networks. Member agencies and institutions nationwide provide vital social services to over 10 million people in need, regardless of their religious, social or economic backgrounds. Catholic Charities USA supports and enhances the work of its members by providing networking opportunities, national advocacy, program development, training and consulting and financial benefits.

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EDITOR'S COLUMN

This spring issue of *Charities USA* actually feels very much like spring, with flowers on the cover and a number of feature articles evoking a sense of newness, growth, opportunity, renewal and energy.

Our first few articles draw attention to the work of some very, shall I say, enterprising Catholic Charities agencies. These agencies, most of them small to midsize, have developed very creative social ventures that are showing our network a new way forward in fulfilling our missions and strengthening our bottom lines.

With child nutrition programs up for reauthorization in Congress this year, we as a network are taking opportunities to influence the debate. Julie Zorb's article on Child Nutrition Reauthorization gives a good overview of the nutrition programs being evaluated now as well as the reforms Catholic Charities agencies are recommending to improve these vital programs.

Though Earth Day is long past, this time of year does make us more conscious of the beauty of God's creation and our responsibility to care

for it. God's creation includes both people and our planet, and as you'll read in "Care for God's Creation," Catholic Charities agencies are increasingly finding how interrelated our lives are with our environment. The pope's anticipated encyclical on the environment will give us opportunities for reflection and renewal in our stewardship over the earth.

We also celebrate the youthful energy of our Volunteer of the Year Award finalists, who seem to work tirelessly to help others. They represent the hundreds of thousands of volunteers of faith, hope and love who exponentially expand the reach of our network.

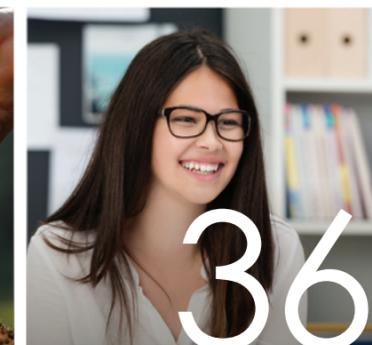
As you read, I hope you will feel the hope that infuses our work. It is a gift of the earth, a gift of this season and a gift of the Holy Spirit to the faithful. And you hardly can find people more faithful than the people of Catholic Charities. ■

Ruth Liljenquist, Managing Editor
To comment on this issue, please write to Ruth Liljenquist at rliljenquist@CatholicCharitiesUSA.org.

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In 1727, Ursuline Sisters from France organized the first Catholic charity organization in territory that would later become the United States. By 1900, more than 800 Catholic institutions had been organized throughout the country primarily to provide care to children, but also to assist struggling immigrant families and the ill, elderly and disabled. During the next ten years, a broad consensus formed among the leaders of Catholic charity organizations that a national organization was needed to build solidarity between them and advocate for the poor. This set the stage for the historic founding of the National Conference of Catholic Charities in 1910.

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Speaking on behalf of the Catholic Charities USA Board of Trustees, I am delighted to welcome Sister Donna Markham, OP, as Catholic Charities USA's new president.

Last year, when Fr. Larry Snyder announced that he would step down as president of Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA), the Board of Trustees formed a search committee for a new president and conducted a process that reached out into the academic, nonprofit, healthcare, social and human services, government and private sectors. A top tier group of 10 to 12 candidates emerged, and among them was Sister Donna. Her leadership experience and commitment to the poor specifically established a benchmark for the search committee. With overwhelming support, she was selected to lead CCUSA into the future.

We did not intentionally seek out a woman to serve as the next president of CCUSA, but the selection of a woman religious provides an opportunity for this 105-year-old institution to recognize the early leadership contributions of women religious in the provision of organized social services in the United States. Religious orders of women played an essential role in American social welfare provision and policy. They established many of the first schools, hospitals and social service organizations. The abundance of religious sisters, more than 40,000 at the beginning of the 20th century, was one factor that allowed these institutions to flourish, many of which developed into today's Catholic Charities agencies and affiliated organizations.

As Sister Donna takes the helm of CCUSA, we look forward to working with this remarkable woman, who brings a breadth of creativity, perspective and experience to Catholic Charities. ■

Sister Linda Yankoski

Sister Linda Yankoski, CSFN
Chair, Catholic Charities USA Board of Trustees

PIVOTING TOWARDS THE FUTURE WITH SOCIAL ENTERPRISE >>

How Tamales, Craigslist and a Boot Camp Are Demonstrating a New Way Forward

By Patrick Brown

Buying furniture for a house can be an overwhelming—and expensive—process. Where do you find an affordable cabinet, table or buffet? Like many of us, residents of eastern Washington state often turn to Craigslist to try to find a great deal. Those that do often end up supporting the work of Catholic Charities Spokane.

Thanks to an investment and support from the agency's leadership and board, a week-long intensive boot camp, and staff commitment to pursue innovation, Furnishings for Hope, a social enterprise of Catholic Charities Spokane, has expanded the agency's reach and is supporting its financial bottom line.

The team in Spokane is far from the only Catholic Charities agency pioneering new

approaches to supporting the work of their agency through social ventures. In northeast Kansas City, immigrant women are now engaged in creating tamales in a new venture created by Catholic Charities of Kansas City-St. Joseph. In Chicago, Phoenix, Fort Worth, Memphis and other communities large and small across the United States, Catholic Charities agencies are spearheading a new way of doing business that supports their financial bottom line and creates opportunities for the people they serve.

Furnishings for Hope began out of a furniture bank aimed at helping low-income families make their living environment feel more like a home, but when staff members noticed that many of the larger pieces proved unsuitable to their work, they began

to wonder. "Is there a way to generate revenue through some of those surplus items?" asked Jim Nicks, director of Spokane Furniture Bank and Furnishings for Hope.

Furnishings for Hope provides furniture to the general public, offering deals on donated, pre-owned and new furniture. "Everything is at a fair price," said Nicks, and they've seen the market respond—their top referral sources are their LED readerboard outside the warehouse and Craigslist. "They come in looking for a good deal on furniture, and when they see [the Catholic Charities sign]... they sometimes end up wanting to pay us what the full price would have been."

In Kansas City, online sales of tamales are spurring opportunity for women living in an economically-disadvantaged neighborhood.



A priest serving in a predominantly-Hispanic neighborhood called Catholic Charities, frustrated at the lack of living-wage jobs around his parish and asking what he could do to provide his community with a pathway out of poverty. From that conversation stemmed the Tamale Project.

"[Our team] thought, what if we did something more than just provide social services? What if we did something that provided jobs, and training and pathways out of poverty?" said Lisa Tulp, communications coordinator at Catholic Charities Kansas City-St. Joseph. They recruited women from the community to bring their traditional tamale recipes and set up a blind taste test to compare their product against other competitors.

Now they make about 500 tamales at a time at a local community kitchen and are looking to expand their sales to farmers markets and other retail outlets. "This is not a business about making a profit," said Tulp. "This is a business about getting people out of poverty."

What makes a business a social enterprise? Put simply, it is the pursuit of doing well by doing good. For social service agencies, it's a method of supporting their bottom line while creating opportunities for the people they serve. The Social Enterprise Alliance, a national membership organization representing non-profits running social ventures, identifies four benchmarks of a successful social enterprise: 1) Fiscal responsibility, providing a pathway to economic self-sufficiency and

reducing public spending; 2) Public safety, making communities safer by disrupting the cycle of poverty; 3) Economic opportunity, improving the lives of those in need by creating jobs in communities in need of economic renewal, and; 4) Social justice, giving a preferential option to those most in need.

Both Furnishings for Hope and the Tamale Project's social ventures benefitted from participation in the Social Venture Boot Camp, part of Catholic Charities USA's ongoing partnership with the University of Notre Dame. The initial Boot Camp was held in 2013 and hosted five agencies interested in building a social enterprise and refining a business model.



You start off and accept the fact that you're going to pivot, to change direction to find the road to make you successful. It was really helpful to let [our stakeholders] know...that we were going to keep pivoting to find our way.

Last year's boot camp saw nine agencies attend, each showing ingenuity and a desire to incorporate bold ideas into their work to end poverty in their community. Representing small to large communities, from San Bernardino, California, to Boston, Massachusetts, these agencies demonstrated what the future of market-driven anti-poverty innovation could look like.

Some of the ventures included Crisp!, a mobile grocery store that provides low-income individuals and families access to produce and healthy food; The Refuge, a coffee shop and wine bar; and Joseph's Place, a service where people looking to hire help with short-term projects could find individuals eager to find work.

Each team was paired with a mentor from the field of social entrepreneurship, giving them the opportunity to learn directly from someone with experience building a business dedicated to doing well while doing good. One of the guest lecturers told the group that the quality of the initiatives being proposed was stunning. "This isn't your grandparents' Catholic Charities," she said.

For those who participated in the boot camp, immediate success was not guaranteed—far from it. "The new buzzword in the business is 'pivot,'" said Gene DiRe, associate director, Catholic Charities Spokane. "You start off and accept the fact that you're going to pivot, to change direction to find the road to make you successful. It was really helpful to let

[our stakeholders] know...that we were going to keep pivoting to find our way."

The big pivot for Furnishings for Hope was making the decision to move after only a year of operation. The intensive development of their business plan at the Boot Camp reaffirmed their intuition that the path to increasing revenue would lie in increasing floor space and moving to a new location. But the investment required to move across town, as well as the fear of losing their original customers, required them to take a risk while pivoting towards a new approach.

The move paid dividends. Furnishings for Hope made its first quarterly profit earlier this year, and is demonstrating trends towards greater growth in its new location.



"The boot camp drove home the fact that more floor space would drive in more revenue," said DiRe. "That has been proven true, and we're already looking to expand again."

Likewise, the Tamale Project learned the importance of adapting to the uncertainty of launching a new project. "The boot camp forced us to look at our business plan and question our assumptions," said Tulp. "We thought we had a good plan heading into the boot camp, but it was much stronger afterwards. The biggest thing we learned was that your business plan will need to be constantly tweaked or improved. Don't fall in love with your first idea."

Following the boot camp, the Kansas City team brought in 30 community members to

serve as an advisory board. "It's constantly a learning project," Tulp said.

The spirit of social enterprise is alive and well in Spokane, Kansas City, and communities across the Catholic Charities network. Utilizing traditional family recipes, Craigslist and every tool in between, initiatives like the Tamale Project and Furnishings for Hope are pioneering new tools to fight poverty and create opportunity—one pivot at a time.

"Every time you're pivoting, you're learning something," said DiRe. "It's not throwing something against the wall to see if it sticks. We'll make that change, and if we have to make another change, it's because we learned something, and we know we're getting closer." ■

Patrick Brown is Catholic Charities USA's manager of communications and partnership with the University of Notre Dame. He is on Twitter at @PTBatCCUSA.



Catholic Charities of West Tennessee's New Social Enterprise Provides Earnings, Empowerment and Employment



Social enterprises at Catholic Charities of West Tennessee have both social and commercial goals. In Bouquets of Hope, clients of our programs are teamed with volunteers to create products for re-sale in the marketplace. Our clients earn a fair wage for their efforts, learn job skills, work on interpersonal skills and build a demonstrated work history that can allow them to transition into external employment.

— Mike Allen, president and CEO of Catholic Charities of West Tennessee



By Christine Hash

Catholic Charities of West Tennessee (CCWTN) recently launched its first social enterprise, Bouquets of Hope, wherein volunteers and hard-to-employ clients of our agency repurpose flowers donated from weddings, funerals and special events. Some of the flowers are repurposed into bouquets of fresh flowers that we deliver to patients in nursing homes and hospices. The remaining flowers are dried and used by clients and volunteers to create items such as wreaths, ornaments and potpourri that we sell at local craft fairs and festivals to fund materials and wages for clients in our job training program.

We took several steps to get our social enterprise off the ground, beginning with the attendance of our CEO Mike Allen, a member of our board, and a potential funder at the first Social Venture Boot Camp at the University of Notre Dame in August 2013. From there, and with an open mindset about our social venture, we took steps to identify goals, determine products and price points, get the word out, develop a network of contacts in the industry and cultivate a strong volunteer base.

Prior to launching this new effort, it was important to obtain the buy-in of two of our key stakeholders—our bishop and our board of directors. As the concept of social enterprise was so new to our agency and diocese, this involved an education process for all of us that took about a year.

From the very beginning, we established a belief that Bouquets of Hope would succeed and we were willing to take risks in order to achieve success. We identified the goals of Bouquets of Hope and what we hoped it would achieve.

After identifying our goals, we determined what products we wanted to sell. Our process of determining which dried flower products we wanted to produce involved many hours of research and consulting with local experts in the industry. We also priced out the cost of making each item in order to determine the price of our products. It is important to know your numbers so your social enterprise can be profitable.

The next step was to get the word out and raise awareness about the program in order to gain the support of the community. We did this through many me-

diums: social media, press releases, church bulletins, local news, a 2-minute promotional video created by a local production company and just talking to everyone we know. We were blown away by the enthusiasm of the community and how fast it all came together. Since our social enterprise is a primarily volunteer-driven effort that relies on donations of flowers, reaching people through these forms of communication continues to be a major factor in our success.

Another step was to develop a network of contacts in the industry. For us, this included florists, wedding and event planners and corporate partners. This also included local experts whom we consult with periodically to make sure we are on the right track. Many of our key contacts in the industry were made through reaching out to our existing contacts first.

One of the most important steps we took to get the social enterprise off the ground was to cultivate a strong base of volunteers for every aspect of the enterprise. In our case, this includes volunteers to design and create our products, sell the products, and volunteers to encourage others to support the program. If volunteers feel strongly about the mission of your social enterprise they will be likely to spread the word with others and encourage others to get involved, both as volunteers and as donors.

Like any business, there are risks associated with starting and maintaining a social enterprise and many obstacles along the way. In our experience with social enterprises, the benefits far outweigh the risks. Bouquets of Hope has provided a huge amount of exposure for our agency and a channel to connect new groups of people to the work of CCWTN. It is especially attractive to those in the business world as they can easily understand the goals of social enterprise. Also, it provides many opportunities for community engagement through volunteerism. Most importantly, social enterprises provide a hand up to our clients and give them the opportunity to develop the confidence and skills they need to change the trajectory of their lives.

Christine Hash is manager of social enterprises and community engagement for Catholic Charities of West Tennessee. ■



CHILD NUTRITION REAUTHORIZATION

Opportunities to Strengthen Food Services for Children

By Julie Zorb

More than 16 million children live in food-insecure households in the United States. In 2013, Catholic Charities agencies reached more than 1.2 million of them through feeding and nutrition programs.

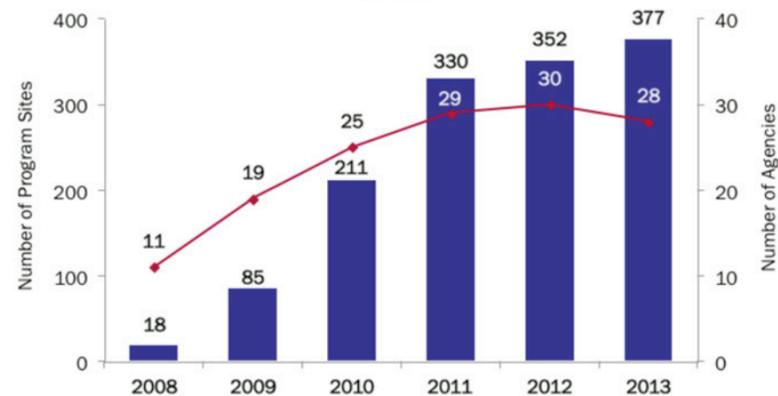
This work and the resulting impact on child hunger are under examination this year as Congress deliberates on the next act authorizing the major federal child nutrition programs. The most recent authorization, through the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act in 2010, is set to expire on September 30, 2015, leaving Congress several months before then to examine the key programs that fall under it and design any legislative changes to the programs. This child nutrition reauthorization (often abbreviated to CNR) covers the following major child feeding programs: the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), the School Breakfast Program (SBP), the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) as well as the smaller Special Milk and Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Programs.

While all of these programs play vital roles in feeding hungry children, Catholic Charities agencies engage primarily with three: the Summer Food Service Program, the Child and Adult Food Care Program and WIC. The direct experience of working with these programs is invaluable for identifying ways to maximize access to nutritious food for children year round. Two agencies' experiences with SFSP and CACFP demonstrate the opportunity to identify recommendations from practice to influence this year's policy discussions.

Summer Food Service Program — Expanding Access

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) reimburses schools, local government programs and nonprofit institutions for meals served to children during the summer months. More than 30 million children receive free and reduced price lunches during the school year through the National School Lunch Program (19.2 million qualify for completely free meals), yet only 2.4 million children are reached through SFSP sites.

Growth of Summer Lunch Programs in the Catholic Charities Network



Angel Guterrez, vice president of community development and outreach services for Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago, presents at a Congressional briefing on April 27, 2015.

CHILD NUTRITION REAUTHORIZATION

In 2013, 28 Catholic Charities agencies helped fill the gap, serving summer meals at 377 sites. Since 2008, the number of summer meal sites in the network has increased more than twenty-fold, from just 18 sites operated in 2008.

Catholic Social Services (CSS) of Anchorage, Alaska, has been operating a summer meal site since 2011, from its St. Francis House food pantry. Located across the street from a high school that provides free lunch to all students due to high poverty in the neighborhood, CSS knew that the 115 families served daily through their food pantry were facing increased needs during the summer months without school lunches for their children. Partnering with the Food Bank of Alaska, CSS's summer meal program at St. Francis House serves from the day after school lets out until the day before school begins again. The impact of this location has been substantial, but CSS is looking for opportunities to expand.

"There are definitely more children to reach," said Linda Bond, program director of St. Francis House. "We will keep going."

They may expand their reach by working with a nearby parish to host a second site, but CSS also has identified a structural change to the program that would allow them to expand services to the children in their community. They've noted that many children, especially teenagers with responsibility for other siblings or who are working summer jobs, ask to pick up a meal and take it with them so they can meet their other responsibilities. However, federal regulations require that the meal be eaten on site.

This highlights just one opportunity for reform in the reauthorization process that could improve access by increasing flexibility.

Child and Adult Care Food Program – Improving Nutrition

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) reimburses child care centers, family child care homes, Head Start locations, after-school programs, family homeless shelters and adult day care centers for nutritious meals provided to eligible individuals in their care. In 2013, 67

Catholic Charities agencies received CACFP funds to reimburse meals served at programs they operate or sponsor.

Catholic Charities, Inc. of the Diocese of Wilmington is the largest sponsor agency for CACFP in Delaware. The agency oversees CACFP meal reimbursements for 22 independent child care centers and 250 day care homes that serve roughly 3,000 children each day. Catholic Charities covers the administrative responsibilities for the program so that these smaller sites can access more easily the CACFP funds. This includes providing training on nutrition guidelines, conducting monitoring visits and handling administrative paperwork to process the meal reimbursements.

Staff point out several advantages of a nonprofit like Catholic Charities providing this monitoring role rather than a state agency, including the ability to leverage their additional services for greater impact on the children.

"Because we're Catholic Charities, and we do more than CACFP, we're able to offer more," said Executive Director Richelle Vible.

This can mean referring families to a variety of services, which last year included a special partnership with the Payless Gives Shoes 4 Kids program. This program provided shoes and socks for children at three of the daycares the agency oversees through CACFP.

Joanne Varnes, program manager of CACFP, also stresses the importance and success of the nutrition standards for meals reimbursed through the program: "Daycare centers and homes are successfully adopting stricter nutrition guidelines, and it's working for the benefit of the children. Stricter guidelines mean better nutrition for the children."

Through training and assistance from Catholic Charities, the sites have successfully implemented the new nutrition guidelines, which has paid off with improved life outcomes for the children in their care, such as decreased obesity. Varnes notes that these nutrition guidelines for day care centers and homes are stricter than those being implemented in the National School Lunch Program. Those nutrition standards promise

to be one of the most contentious topics in the overall child nutrition reauthorization process, but the success of nutritional guideline implementation in CACFP may offer a model in those discussions.

Varnes highlights another area for potential program improvement. "The level of paperwork is crazy!" Delaware still requires many records to be kept by hand and in hard copy, rather than electronically. This keeps her staff in the office unnecessarily, rather than out in the field monitoring, training and assisting. Some states have systems that improve efficiency by allowing CACFP sites to file reports electronically. Providing for technology upgrades would increase efficiency and ultimately benefit the children fed through the program.

The Road to Reauthorization – Opportunities for Impact

In 2013, Pope Francis said, "The scandal of the millions of people who suffer from hunger should not paralyze us, but rather move us to act—everyone, individuals, families, communities, institutions, governments—to eliminate this injustice."

As Pope Francis has called, we have an obligation to respond to the injustice of 16 million food-insecure children in America not with paralysis, but with action. Catholic Charities agencies take direct action against child hunger in their daily ministries, but in this time of public dialogue on broader systems, also have an opportunity to amplify those actions through advocacy. As faith-based organizations with direct experience administering and delivering federal child nutrition programs, Catholic Charities agencies have a particularly strong role to play in advancing reauthorization by not only calling on Congress to fulfill its moral obligation to ensure that no child in America goes hungry, but by also providing practical solutions to improve the current programs that help achieve that vision.

CCUSA, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the National Catholic Education Association and other national Catholic partners have coalesced around three core principles for the reauthorization:

- Improve access and flexibility for child nutrition and school-based meal programs to respond to local needs.
- Invest in resources and protect from harmful cuts and changes the hunger and nutrition programs that feed hungry children and expectant and breastfeeding mothers throughout the year.
- Protect recent gains made in eligibility and certification so that more children get the food they need for their healthy development.

Hundreds of advocates elevated these principles on Capitol Hill during the Catholic Social Ministry Gathering in February. Now, Congress has begun to hold hearings on the specific programs, and the time is ripe to share local examples like those from Anchorage and Delaware that show how these programs are operating and how they can be improved to maximize children's access to nutritious food.

Angel Gutierrez, vice president of community development and outreach services for Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago, seized this opportunity for advocacy, presenting on his agency's efforts at a recent Congressional briefing in Washington, DC. Catholic Charities in Chicago has the largest summer meal program in the Catholic Charities network, with 316,000 meals served last summer over 54 days across 148 partner locations, including 60 sites along mobile delivery routes.

Drawing on this vast experience, Gutierrez built the case for increased flexibility in summer meal delivery, explaining how waivers for violent neighborhoods and extreme heat have afforded their agency the ability to deliver meals to children more safely and effectively. Like Anchorage, their experience demonstrates that flexibility in regard to the congregate feeding requirement is a "natural no-brainer" that improves child nutrition. CCUSA will continue to draw on the direct practice and experience of Catholic Charities agencies across the country to identify and elevate common sense reforms such as these to improve federal child nutrition programs up for reauthorization this year. ■

Julie Zorb is manager of policy and research for Catholic Charities USA.

CATHOLIC CHARITIES USA'S 2015 VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARD

MEET THE FINALISTS



Catholic Charities USA is pleased to honor the seven amazing volunteers who were finalists for our 2015 Volunteer of the Year Award. They represent the more than 300,000 volunteers who dedicate their time and talents to the Catholic Charities network each year. By leveraging their interests, talents and skills to serve and help others, each of the finalists exemplifies the mission and spirit of Catholic Charities.

Pictured from left to right:

- Nalda "Nod" Mitchell
- Alma Revesz
- Josephina "Josie" Nieto
- Dillia Sylvester
- Judge John McShane
- Jim and Norma Malcolm

THE 2015 CATHOLIC CHARITIES USA VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARD WINNERS

Meet Richard and Elisabeth Buchanan IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF CHARITIES USA!

Nalda "Nod" Mitchell has volunteered at Catholic Charities of Central Colorado and its Marian House Soup Kitchen program for 29 years. The soup kitchen serves hot meals 365 days a year to nearly 600 people and relies on 50 to 55 volunteers each day to help run this ministry. For 20 years, Nod has served as lead volunteer for the group of volunteers that prepares and serves meals on Tuesdays. She and co-lead Iris Lucas plan the menu, prepare the shopping list, and organize and train their volunteers. The managers have come to regard the Tuesday group as a reliable "well-oiled machine." Nod also served on the board of directors for Catholic Charities at one point, advocating for a new \$4 million soup kitchen to better serve people. She helped secure her church's donation of \$250,000, an investment that is paying off with nearly twice as many meals served at Marian House every day.

Alma Revesz is a lead volunteer at the Humanitarian Respite Center operated by Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley in McAllen, Texas, to minister to migrants seeking asylum in the United States. She began volunteering at the center in June 2014 and now is a full-time volunteer, serving upwards of 54 hours per week. Alma fulfills just about every job at the center, but she shines the most in her service to the migrant families. Her bright "Bienvenidos" to the refugees when they arrive reassures them that the center is a safe haven. Alma helps with paperwork, picks out clothing for the families, helps the adults make phone calls, arranges medical assistance, packs supplies and food and readies them for their further journeys, giving a warm embrace and sharing prayers. Alma is a joy to be around, for she truly lives and shares the joy of the gospel.

At 84 years young, **Josephina "Josie" Nieto** drives herself every weekday morning to the Mamie George Community Center of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, where she graciously helps clean and open the center's Patty's Café, which serves a hot meal to low-income seniors. Folding napkins, sweeping the floor, pouring ketchup, chopping vegetables, arranging tables, filling water cups, even washing all the heavy pots and pans used by the cooks—there is no job she is not willing to do for others, inspired by her faith in God! Every day she has a smile on her face and lifts staff, volunteers and clients with her encouraging words, kind demeanor, the dignity and respect with which she treats every client and her dedicated commitment to volunteer service. While most 84-year-old seniors choose to retire quietly at home, alone or with family members, Josie says she can't imagine slowing down now.

Dillia Sylvester has dedicated her life to serving the Lord and helping others in her community, one of the poorest in the state of Rhode Island. With a gentle spirit and a soft voice, Dillia has been instrumental in coordinating and recruiting many volunteers. For 17 years, she has served as a volunteer coordinator for the Diocese of Providence & Catholic Charities Neighborhood Friendly Visitor Program, coordinating volunteers in making visits to homebound seniors and those residing in nursing homes. She also started a soup kitchen and food cupboard with her husband Dan at their parish, recruiting 30 volunteers to assist them in helping over 100 families a week. And that's not all. This good woman also has volunteered for 27 years with her parish's St. Vincent De Paul society, visiting needy families who apply for services. She is truly a model for all in the Diocese.

Two mornings every week, **Judge John McShane** is not in his courtroom, but in the pre-school classroom of the Northside Child Development Center of Catholic Charities Saint Paul and Minneapolis. As a trial court judge, with two terms in juvenile court, he's been coming to this classroom for nearly 20 years to enhance the education of the little ones there, many of whom live in poverty, knowing that with a better start in life they are less likely to end up in a court like his. When he comes in the room, the children flock to his side, exclaiming "Mr. John! Mr. John!" in excitement. His ability to play, care and simply be a friend are of utmost importance to the children. With a spirit of fun, he reads, colors and plays with them, building their confidence, unlocking their imaginations and instilling a lifelong love of learning that will help them succeed in life.

Jim and Norma Malcolm have been volunteering at the Catholic Charities of Fort Wayne-South Bend RSVP Community Center of Caring food pantry since it opened in 2005. Serving 12 hours each week, they stock shelves, manage food donations of fresh and frozen products, and give assistance and a friendly smile to those who come to the pantry. Jim and Norma also help deliver food to several homebound individuals and volunteer overtime when other volunteers can't make it. Norma will often make dishes out of some of the more unusual foods they receive at the pantry so clients can taste the dish and also take home a recipe. Jim also provides transportation to medical appointments for local veterans, often driving them two to three hours each way. With a kind word for everyone, Jim and Norma have a true spirit of giving that shines through. ■

A close-up photograph of a hand pouring water from the palm onto a small green seedling growing from a mound of dark soil. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting an outdoor setting. The lighting is bright, highlighting the texture of the hand and the water droplets.

Care for God's Creation

We show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. Care for the earth is not just an Earth Day slogan, it is a requirement of our faith. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God's creation. This environmental challenge has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored.

— *Principles of Catholic Social Teaching, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops*

CATHOLIC CHARITIES AT WORK CARING FOR PEOPLE AND THE PLANET

By Ruth Liljenquist

Caring for creation is an ancient tradition. In the beginning, God gave humankind stewardship over the earth, with instruction to cultivate and care for it. But many seem to have forgotten this tradition, using the earth's resources irresponsibly and polluting our beautiful Earth. The need to recover this ancient tradition of stewardship is more than apparent.

This summer, Pope Francis will release an encyclical that will address our responsibility toward creation. Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA) is already planning how we as a network will respond to this call for greater stewardship.

At the same time, however, we are proud to see that Catholic Charities agencies have already made efforts to care for creation, both for people and the planet, recognizing the interrelation between the two.

"We are engaged in this work because of our commitment to the Gospel," said Kathy Brown, senior director for mission and Catholic identity for CCUSA. "We believe in the dignity of human life, and when the envi-

ronment that is needed for a dignified life is threatened, we must be concerned."

Climate change is clearly an issue of much concern as we consider the wellbeing of creation. Whatever one believes about the reality of climate change and its causes, it is a fact that our world is experiencing extreme weather events that are impacting millions of people, particularly the poor and vulnerable. These events are intense and hard to predict, making it difficult to prepare fully. And yet, we as a world and as Catholic Charities must prepare and respond as much and as well as we can, mitigating the effects of these extreme weather events on the poor and vulnerable.

Getting Ready for the Next Disaster

Catholic Charities, Diocese of Rockville Centre

Superstorm Sandy hit Long Island much harder than many people expected, particularly along its southern coast. The high winds uprooted



trees, tore pieces from buildings and took down power lines, while the storm surge flooded countless homes, damaged others beyond repair and even carried whole houses away. The devastation was shocking to Long Islanders who had never experienced a storm like Sandy.

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Rockville Centre responded quickly, providing immediate assistance and then starting up a disaster case management program. So many people were in need, but the agency soon found that three groups of people were particularly at risk—seniors, immigrants and those with disabilities. With a grant from CCHD, Catholic Charities targeted outreach to these groups, working in parishes to provide information and resources to help them not only recover but become better prepared for future disasters.

“Everything we did we tried to use as a platform for disaster preparedness,” said Laura Cassell, executive director of Catholic Charities in Rockville Centre. “In real time, as we were responding, we looked at how we could encourage preparedness.”

Today, even as disaster case management continues for over 800 families, the agency is now working to develop Disaster Action Response Teams in parishes through a grant from CCUSA. Members on each team will have counseling and pastoral experience and will be trained to be sensitive to the particular needs of seniors, immigrants and those with disabilities. When disaster strikes in a neighboring parish, they will go in, visiting door to door and making contact with people, asking how they can help and letting them know about recovery resources.

“If we can be a catalyst to form these teams in parishes throughout the diocese, we’ll have a much greater opportunity to assist people after the next disaster,” said Cassell.

Preparing Homes for High Winds and Waters

Catholic Charities, Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005 damaged or demolished thousands of homes along Louisiana’s coastline. Many of them belonged to low-income elderly and disabled residents, many of whom did not have the means to move elsewhere.

Catholic Charities of Houma-Thibodaux became a partner in making their homes livable again—albeit several feet off the ground. In the renovation process, many homes were elevated more than 10 feet to protect against future storm surges and rising sea levels, but this created an access problem for seniors and people with disabilities. With disaster relief funds from CCUSA, Catholic Charities in Houma installed nearly 50 lifts to help people get up and down from their homes.

Catholic Charities also has worked to educate the community about building hurricane resistant and energy efficient homes. In 2009, the agency hosted a workshop on sustainable building and climate change impacts for Louisiana. The agency also partnered with the Terrebonne Readiness and Assistance Coalition to build five LA LIFT homes—energy-efficient elevated homes for coastal areas designed by engineers at MIT to withstand hurricane force winds. Catholic Charities has further worked with the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux to build four homes inland that demonstrate sustainable building—using less wood, better

insulation, recycled products and materials meant to withstand natural disasters.

Storm surges and hurricane winds are not the only thing people worry about along Louisiana’s coast. The coastal wetlands are drying out and sinking, the land is eroding, and the sea level is rising, intruding further inland and threatening fresh water ecosystems as well as fresh water supplies for the area’s residents.

All these problems require a greater commitment to the principle of stewardship, said Rob Gorman, executive director of Catholic Charities in Houma. “We need to remember the call from Scripture to be good stewards of the earth and all its creatures.”

Protecting Water, Air and Land in the San Joaquin Valley

Catholic Charities, Diocese of Stockton

California’s extreme drought is visible when you drive into the San Joaquin Valley, historically one of the most productive agricultural regions in the country. “You can see the fruit orchards drying out,” said Elvira Ramirez, executive director of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Stockton. “The farmers have had to let them go dry because there’s no water.”

The impact of the drought is being felt throughout the valley. With farmers planting less, there are fewer farm jobs, making vulnerable families even more vulnerable. Some of the small rural communities have already run out of water, making it necessary to truck water in. And the air quality, already quite bad because of pollution from farms and industry, no public transportation and natural features of the land that trap air in the valley, is worse. There is no rain to clean the air.

These impacts are all concerns for Catholic Charities of Stockton’s Environmental Justice (EJ) Program. Founded in 2006, the program advocated for passage of California’s landmark climate change legislation to cut greenhouse gases in California to 1990 levels by 2020. Since then, the program has been actively involved with air quality, climate change, land use and transportation issues. Its focus is largely on health outcomes and impacts on poor and vulnerable communities. With the drought, water has come to the fore as an issue.

“We have only ‘dabbled’ in water, largely because of how divisive an issue it is, even within our diocese,” said Katelyn Roedner Sutter, director of the EJ program. “But now we can’t ignore it.”

The EJ program has focused its efforts on sharing accurate high quality information about the drought, encouraging water conservation and fostering dialogue and reflection. In the last year, the program has invited in policy experts, representatives from water utilities, farmers, land conservationists and others to talk to the community about water issues, usage, and conservation strategies.

These events have given the community a chance to reflect on their faith and practice in caring for creation and respecting life. “These issues all can be framed as life issues,” said Sutter. “We can’t live without air, water and land that grows food, so how we treat these things is really a part of our reverence for life.” ■

Ruth Lijjenquist is the managing editor of Charities USA.

THE PILLARS OF POVERTY REDUCTION

When Catholic Charities USA launched the Campaign to Reduce Poverty in America eight years ago, we identified five areas of need that we as a nation must address to bring about poverty reduction. These five areas—the pillars of our poverty reduction strategy—are food security, health, housing, education and workforce development, and family economic security.

Nearly every Catholic Charities agency offers programs and services that address at least one of these pillars, if not all of them. As we continue forward with the campaign, we want to call attention to the good work of Catholic Charities agencies across the country in meeting these five areas of need and helping people move out of poverty.

HOUSING

EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

HEALTH

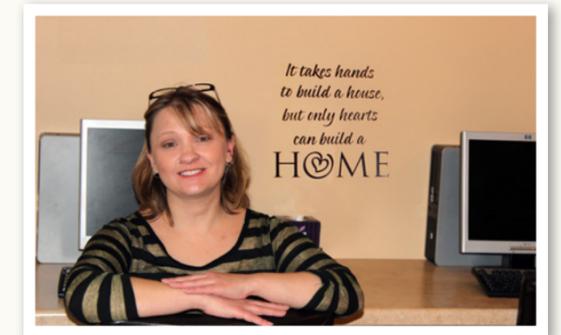
FAMILY ECONOMIC SECURITY

FOOD SECURITY

A Roof and a Solid Foundation for Homeless Teens

Catholic Charities, Diocese of St. Cloud

By Trina Dietz



Catholic Charities Youth House in St. Cloud, Minnesota, blends seamlessly into its neighborhood. It's situated near St. Cloud State University, so the coming and going of young people through its doors is nothing special in the neighborhood.

To the homeless young people who pass through its doors though, the house is anything but ordinary. It's a place to begin their adulthood on a solid foundation.

For nearly 20 years, staff members of the Catholic Charities Supportive Housing for Youth (SHY) program, which oversees the Youth House, have mentored homeless youth, helping them find housing and dealing with the myriad troubles being young and homeless brings.

The Youth House, opened in 2014, allows young people, ages 16 to 24, to not only have a roof over their heads, but round-the-

clock guidance as they build the foundations for the rest of their lives.

With her nose ring and youthful face, Suzie Rice, the Youth House supervisor, blends in with the youth she mentors.

Suzie recently recounted the story of a young resident who broke into tears when she was shown to her room. Through her sobs, 19-year-old "Ashley" explained that she'd been couch-hopping (staying with friends for a night or two at a time) for four years—the entire time she was in high school. The relative who was made her guardian after her parents' rights were terminated had kicked her out.

Perhaps more heartbreaking though, was Ashley's high school story. She's an incredibly bright young woman and graduated from high school with high honors. As her honor-roll friends went off to college, Ashley contin-

ued couch-hopping. The same relative who kicked her out had told her that since she was a ward of state, her education would be paid for. Ashley has learned the hard way that this isn't true.

Suzie and the Youth House team have listened as Ashley shares her frustration "I didn't think I'd get to go to a fancy college, but I thought I'd at least get to go to college."

Now, at the Youth House, Ashley does have someone to help her. Staff members are helping her apply to colleges and complete financial aid applications.

She hopes to begin her college career—and the rest of her life, in the fall. ■

Trina Dietz is communications coordinator for Catholic Charities of the Diocese of St. Cloud.



HOUSING

Making the Transition to Employment

Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of Newark

By Ruth Liljenquist



In March, the Workforce Development (WFD) program of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Newark held a celebration honoring six people. These six, graduates of the program, had kept their jobs for over a year. That was a success worth celebrating.

“Our goal is to help people get jobs and keep them,” said Hector Smith, director of WFD for Catholic Charities.

WFD has developed over the years to provide quite a comprehensive array of services to three groups of people referred to the program—welfare recipients, ex-offenders and people with disabilities. In addition to providing employment services such as job search, resume writing, interview preparation and job placement, the program offers ESL and GED classes as well as a number of training programs: certified nursing assistant, commercial drivers license, building maintenance, food services, forklift operations, computer literacy, office technology and

retail sales and customer service. Further, the program provides a range of services and supported work opportunities for people with disabilities.

WFD also focuses on teaching the skills that ensure job success and longevity, such as meeting workplace expectations, learning to do the job well, dealing with workplace stressors, resolving problems, managing conflict and critique, overcoming mistakes and being patient with the job.

“Particularly for ex-offenders and welfare recipients, we’re working on behavioral modifications that will ensure success,” said Smith. “We are helping them transform, to make the transition to employment. There’s always a fear for them, because they are on a journey they’ve never been on before, but they learn to trust us. We’re on this journey together.”

Ex-offenders face particular challenges in finding employment. “With some of the acts they have committed, it’s no wonder they’ve

never had a job,” said Smith. “They’ve also never had any training for a job. They’ve never sat down in a classroom to really apply themselves. We’re trying to see that happen here.”

Smith recalls a young man with a long rap sheet of offenses. He worked hard in the training courses in building maintenance and forklift operations, and subsequently was hired at a Target store. One day, the young man came back to report that he was being considered for a job as a supervisor. As he told Smith of this success, he broke down and cried.

The process of applying oneself, training, finding work and succeeding in that work is life-changing. “We see our people learning and growing and doing positive things,” said Smith. “We are proud to be a part of that process.” ■

Ruth Liljenquist is the managing editor of Charities USA.

Health and Wellness for the Homeless

Catholic Charities, Diocese of Santa Rosa

By Deborah Walton



Northern California is the epicenter of healthy living—there is great food, plenty of outdoor activities, and lots of help for emotional issues. But what if you are homeless?

Catholic Charities, Diocese of Santa Rosa (CCSDR) recognizes the serious challenge for homeless individuals to get healthy and maintain a healthy lifestyle:

- Homeless individuals are three to four times more likely to die prematurely than those in housing.
- Homeless children are sick four times more often than other children and have higher rates of obesity due to nutritional deficiencies.
- Those living on the streets and in shelters have higher rates of communicable diseases.

CCSDR’s Housing and Shelter department recently implemented a Health and Wellness program for residents of our Family Support

Center, which houses 138 homeless adults and children, and our Sam Jones Hall shelter, where 799 homeless adults were housed last year.

Coordinated by Briana Keating, the Health and Wellness program first increased the quality of the food served, replacing canned and pre-made food with fresh produce donated by local farms. A bowl of fresh fruit is always out for residents to snack on, and a fresh salad is served with dinner every night. Meatless Mondays are a new addition. Recognizing that the issue of hunger is not so much about lack of food, but lack of nutritious food, we implemented new policies regarding what types of food donations are accepted—no more sugary foods or drinks, chips or other junk food. Junk food is cheap, but the calories are no substitute for a healthy meal.

Additional programs aimed at promoting wellness have been added. Freedom from Smoking classes are free and open to the public in addition to our residents. Walking

groups are organized at each site, as are field trips to area parks and hiking trails. The children in our after-school program do bimonthly health and wellness activities, including yoga, healthy cooking and gardening. We provide classes in nutrition, stress reduction, meditation and more.

Partnering with other departments at CCSDR, we have included information and signups for CalFresh (food stamps), gardening classes, free dental checkups and flu shots. Soon we will implement Catholic Charities USA’s Cooking Matters grant program teaching people how to buy healthy and affordable food at the grocery store.

As our homeless population becomes more aware of and interested in their personal health and the health of their families, we are strengthening not only their physical health but their ability to make positive changes in their lives as well. ■

Deborah Walton is communications manager for Catholic Charities, Diocese of Santa Rosa.

EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

HEALTH

Achieving Financial Competency for the Unbanked

Catholic Charities of Kansas City-St. Joseph

By Ruth Liljenquist



There's a saying: "It costs more to be poor." And it's true when it comes to individuals who operate outside of the financial mainstream. They don't always know all of their options and often don't know how to take that first step to exercise those options. Because of that, they frequently face less secure, less convenient and more expensive alternatives to carrying out their everyday financial transactions.

Catholic Charities of Kansas City-St. Joseph is working to change that. Through a partnership with Holy Rosary Credit Union (HRCU) in Kansas City, they are helping low-income and unbanked clients, particularly immigrants, learn about and take advantage of financial products and services tailored to their needs.

The partnership with HRCU offers membership to Catholic Charities staff and any client referral of the agency. These clients are first prepared through financial education and a lot of reassurance.

"The people we work with have no understanding of the banking system," said Becky Gripp, coordinator of the agency's Economic Security Program. "They have to learn how it all works and to trust in the banking system and that their money will be secure."

In addition to offering standard banking accounts, HRCU has developed loan products to meet the needs of middle-and low-income families and help them build good credit and even assets. One loan program lowers the interest rate every six months if payments are made on time. Further, the paid interest on the loan goes into a savings account for the client.

"Most banks don't want to take on high-risk low-credit or no-credit clients because the banks don't make a lot of money and the clients need a lot of support," said Gripp. "But Holy Rosary has really worked hard to make this work. They are willing to take the risk to help people help themselves."

One client of Catholic Charities was in danger of losing her job when the call center she worked for decided to make all their jobs home-based. She needed a computer at home to keep her job. With her financial preparation through Catholic Charities and a loan from HRCU, she was able to get a computer, keep her job and build credit.

"When someone takes the information they've learned and puts it into action, they've moved from being informed to being competent," said Gripp. "And with competency in using the financial system, people can afford a better quality of life for themselves and their families." ■

Ruth Liljenquist is the managing editor of Charities USA.

Feeding the Hungry, Nourishing the Soul

Catholic Charities, Diocese of Arlington

By Morgan McKean



Within the 21 counties of the Diocese of Arlington in Virginia, the demand for food far exceeds the current supply. More than 236,000 people are food insecure. Parishes and community pantries are overwhelmed, and people are often turned away because of empty shelves.

Last year, the food distribution program operated by Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Arlington was turning people away too. Operating out of the cellar of our transitional housing program in Alexandria, in the north-eastern part of our diocese, the program tried to meet the demand, but we found ourselves delaying donations simply because we couldn't store any more food.

However, with a substantial financial donation and a challenge to re-energize our food distribution program, the St. Lucy Project was born. The goal was simple—get more food to the poorest parts of the diocese.

In November 2014, our St. Lucy Project hub opened in Manassas, a city farther west of Alexandria. The 5,000 square foot warehouse significantly increased capacity and the new refrigerated 16-foot truck, made possible by a parish grant, can back right up to the loading dock. Additionally, the hub is near critical highways in the diocese, making it easier and more efficient to receive donations and distribute food to where it is needed the most.

At the same time, we upgraded our existing pantries in Front Royal and Leesburg, cities further out in our diocese, to larger and more accessible locations, while maintaining the third pantry in Alexandria. The addition of refrigeration increased our capacity to provide healthy, perishable foods.

The St. Lucy Project continues our work with 51 pantry partners in every county of the diocese, providing enough food to enable these pantries to serve the hungry in their immediate communities.

In 2014, we distributed more than 729,000 pounds of food across the diocese. Our goal is to distribute 2.5 million pounds. This outcome is possible with key relationships with parishes, schools and other ministry groups. Dedicated volunteers impact each stage of the process, from organizing food drives, sorting and stocking the shelves, assisting with direct service, packing boxes to be delivered to partner pantries and even using their own transportation and gas to deliver food to pantries hours away.

The ultimate goal of The St. Lucy Project is to fulfill the Holy Father's call of building "a culture of encounter," a culture where we make a point to interact with and bring Christ's love to the poor. We want to feed the hungry and nourish the soul. ■

Morgan McKean is the development associate for Catholic Charities Diocese of Arlington.

FAMILY ECONOMIC SECURITY

FOOD SECURITY

CCUSA UPDATE



Sister Norma Pimentel Speaks Up for Migrants at the United Nations

Sister Norma Pimentel, executive director of Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley in Brownsville, Texas, spoke in March at the United Nations on behalf of the Catholic Charities network and its response to the unaccompanied minors and families who came across our nation's border recently.

Sister Norma spoke to an international audience at the United Nations about her experiences last summer and the broader efforts to support families, women and children, especially in light of this September's World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia and the accompanying visit by Pope Francis.

"Sister Norma and her agency were on the front lines providing a compassionate response in the midst of a humanitarian crisis," said CCUSA's Senior Vice President of Disaster Operations Maria J. Vorel. "Multiple experts have said that this summer may bring another influx of children and families seeking a better life. Thanks to the leadership of local directors like Sister Norma, I know that the Catholic Charities network will be standing ready to support them and all families searching for economic security."

Sister Norma, a sister with the Missionaries of Jesus, led community efforts to respond to the needs of families and children who were seeking refuge in the United States from their violence-torn homelands. Her humanitarian efforts received national and international attention, and her example of compassionate leadership was praised by figures ranging from Sen. Ted Cruz to Rep. Nancy Pelosi. She was called an "indispensable leader" by *Texas Monthly* magazine and received the 2015 Keep the Dream Alive award from CCUSA.

"We all have responsibility to bring solutions to the immigration crisis," said Sister Norma. "And it all starts with us, the women who provide the core of the family, and the families who provide the strength to endure."

The address took place at a side event during the 59th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which took place in March at United Nations Headquarters in New York. The session included representatives from UN member states and entities, as well as non-governmental organizations across the globe.

CCUSA Senior Vice Presidents Participate in *Gaudium et Spes* Conference



2015 is the 50th anniversary of *Gaudium et Spes* ("Joy and Hope"), one of the four Apostolic Constitutions resulting from the Second Vatican Council. The University of Notre Dame's Center for Social Concerns hosted a conference focusing on the legacy and impact of this historic document and what its message of "joy and hope" has for us today.

At the conference, CCUSA's Senior Vice President for Social Policy Brian Corbin and Senior Vice President for Mission and Ministry Cynthia Dobrzynski presented a paper titled, "*Gaudium et Spes* and the Praxis of Charity," which stated:

Based on the local realities witnessed by Catholic Charities agencies every day and grounded in rigorous social science, the Church's unique and vital voice can encourage society to address more comprehensively and effectively the "griefs and anxieties" of those in need. To build a society that is more just and charitable, we must constantly analyze the micro- and macro-level problems in our own culture and address the unique challenges facing families in our own country and in our own time.

The full text of the paper is available in the CCUSA Resource Library on Scribd: www.scribd.com/doc/259681092. ■

Maria Vorel Joins CCUSA as Senior Vice President of Disaster Operations



In early 2015, Maria J. Vorel joined Catholic Charities USA as its new senior vice president of disaster operations. In this position, Vorel provides strategic vision and planning to educate, recruit, mobilize and reinforce disaster response activities. Central to this position is supporting member agencies in planning and responding to disasters. This includes expanding opportunities for member agencies to increase their knowledge of and participation in disaster response, risk reduction and preparedness.

Prior to joining CCUSA, Vorel served at the Federal Emergency Management Agency, (FEMA) where she was known for her strategic leadership in emergency management. In her most recent position, Vorel provided national program leadership and management to build capacity for disaster operations in risk reduction programs; designed mechanisms and maintained organizational cohesion between senior management in regions and Headquarters; provided leadership and direction to all FEMA regional offices in developing a vision, strategy and implementation for Joint Field Office organizational design, missions, functions, standard operating procedures and systems; and served as agency subject matter expert in disaster cadre training and capacity building.

Earlier significant positions in FEMA included serving as the National Program Director for Project Impact, a highly innovative program that fostered consensus-based community actions to promote disaster resistant communities in every state. Additionally, in the capacity of Deputy Director for FEMA's Office of Legislative Affairs, Vorel was responsible for overall coordination of liaison and legislative efforts between the U.S. Congress and FEMA, which included working as a negotiator and strategist with Congress for controversial and sensitive national legislative and programmatic issues.

Vorel is active in her parish and her community of Fairfax County, Virginia. She is the proud parent of two children.

Welcome, Maria, to CCUSA!

NEWS NOTES



FEMA Approves \$2.1 Million For Archdiocese of New York Agency

In April, U.S. Senator Charles E. Schumer announced that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has approved \$2.1 million in funding for Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York, which is operating the New York State Disaster Case Management Program for Superstorm Sandy victims. This will allow the program to continue through October. There are currently 3,000 open cases through Catholic Charities, and federal funding was necessary to make sure caseworkers could continue helping these victims. Schumer's office had been working to secure this funding.

"I am happy to announce that New York State's Disaster Case Management Program contract will continue uninterrupted. With roughly 3,000 open cases, Sandy victims desperately needed this extension to keep the focus on rebuilding their lives and their properties. Without some help and expert advice from great organizations like Catholic Charities, it's very difficult for homeowners to juggle the competing interests pulling on them," said Senator Schumer.

Irish Government Minister Visits St. Patrick Center

It's an annual St. Patrick's Day tradition for Irish government ministers to travel abroad and promote their homeland. Meetings with political officials, plus some time to enjoy local St. Patrick's Day celebrations, are generally part of the docket.

During a March 13 visit to St. Louis, Irish government minister Paudie Coffey made a stop at St. Patrick Center Downtown to learn about the Catholic Charities agency's outreach to homeless men and women. The context was relevant to Coffey, who serves as minister of state for housing, planning and co-coordinator of the Construction 2020 Strategy, a program to renew the country's construction industry.

Laurie Phillips, who became St. Patrick Center's chief executive officer in January, led Coffey and others on a tour of the Downtown facility. Stops included the new McMurphy's Cafe, the welcome center, BEGIN business incubator and food pantry. St. Patrick Center serves 8,000 clients and their families each year.

Coffey said his visit emphasized the reality that homelessness has no boundaries. Efforts to empower chronically homeless individuals (Ireland uses the term "rough sleepers" to describe the chronically homeless) through supportive services have been bolstered through the support of church and other charitable groups.

Since Ireland was hit hard by the 2008 global economic crash, the country has seen an increase in what Coffey described as "new homeless," young families who are in danger of losing their homes. They experience issues with rent or repossession by the bank; some have lost their jobs and can't afford to maintain the rent or mortgage. One of the biggest issues these families face is not knowing their rights as tenants or homeowners, Coffey noted.

"We're trying to counteract that by being proactive with education, awareness campaigns and advocacy groups," Coffey said. In the meantime, the Construction 2020 Strategy aims to increase the supply of houses where demand is highest and create initiatives to incentivize the private sector.

Ireland also is about to embark on a six-year social housing program in which almost 4€ billion will be invested in a social housing structure that will ensure people have accommodations at an affordable rate.

Excerpted from an article by Jennifer Brinker first published in the St. Louis Review.

Catholic Charities Maine Awarded \$1.6 Million Federal Contract

Catholic Charities Maine's Substance Abuse and Mental Health Counseling Services in Portland is the recipient of a five-year federal contract of over \$1.6 million in funding to provide community-based outpatient substance abuse and mental health treatment services. The services will be administered to federal offenders confined in community-based programs and on home confinement in the greater Portland area beginning April 1, 2015.

"This is an opportunity for Catholic Charities Maine to further expand our services to individuals with substance abuse and mental health issues who have the additional stigma of criminal justice involvement," noted Carolee Lindsay, director of Co-Occurring and Substance Abuse Services.

"This contract is a tremendous testament to the quality of services our team provides in this field and is in keeping with our mission to serve the most vulnerable populations here in Maine," added Stephen Letourneau, CEO.

Catholic Charities of West Tennessee Launches St. Bernard's Biscuits



Catholic Charities of West Tennessee (CCWTN) recently launched its second social enterprise, St. Bernard's Biscuits, a line of 100 percent natural dog treats produced by residents and volunteers of its Genesis House homeless shelter. The initial product line features 12 oz. bags of bone shaped treats in "Peanut Butter Bites" and "Fresh Bark Breath" flavors available in two sizes, along with a line of larger, frosting covered individual treats in different shapes.

Clients of Genesis House are paid a fair wage, encouraged to open a bank account (for direct deposit) and taught a modest skill. Through this opportunity, they can establish a work history, which is so important to gaining meaningful employment in the external marketplace.

St. Bernard's Biscuits were first made available on April 4 and are being sold at local farmers markets, community festivals and church fairs.

Commenting on the launch, Mike Allen, president and CEO of CCWTN, said, "We are indebted to some very generous community partners for their assistance in helping us get our newest social enterprise off the ground. The team at Sullivan Branding developed the logo and all of the packaging and branding materials, while Sheila Thomas of Favorite Recipes Press assisted in research for 100% natural dog treat recipes. I'd be remiss, and probably not welcomed home, not to also mention my daughter, Caroline Allen, who named the enterprise 'St. Bernard's Biscuits!'"

Nashville Agency Offers Help in the Kitchen and Classroom



A new program offered by Catholic Charities of Tennessee is helping Nashville residents enhance their lives through nutritional instruction and academic assistance. Recipes for Success is a free monthly workshop that strives to provide local families with school tutoring for their kids and tips for healthy living. The program started in January and is meeting monthly through the end of the school year.

This effort is the result of a long-term collaboration between Catholic Charities, the South Nashville Family Resource Center and CASTLES

(Communities and Students Together for Learning-Enhanced Service).

“We’ve been working with Catholic Charities and CASTLES for the past seven or eight years,” said Leslie Hayes, director of the South Nashville Family Resource Center. “We’ve been talking to them as a part of an advisory council, assessing the needs of families in local neighborhoods. We thought a program like this would be beneficial to our clients.”

Most of the participants are immigrants, but anyone is welcome to join. “The majority of the people we see are relatively new to America and adjusting to American culture,” said Hayes. “With their child’s schooling, they might have trouble interpreting the grading system or talking to teachers about issues their kids are facing.”

“CASTLES is a service-learning program developed by students at Vanderbilt University. It aims to encourage Vanderbilt students to serve at-risk youth by promoting physical wellness and academic success. The students from CASTLES are the tutors for the academic part of Recipes for Success,” Hayes said.

“It’s very interactive. They start things off by playing a game with the kids and assessing new participants’ needs,” she said. “Then they break off for one-on-one tutoring and homework help. We provide snacks, and the kids love them. For this portion, parents can either stay with their kids or wait in the kitchen.”

The other part is for providing tips on living a healthier lifestyle. “When the kids are done with their tutoring, ev-

eryone meets in the kitchen. There, we talk about how to prepare foods in a healthier way. We also talk about strategies to help participants become more physically active,” Hayes said.

Hayes loves to see how the program brings families together. “The most rewarding part of it for me is seeing the parents taking a more active role in their children’s education. With the tutoring sessions, many of them stick around to help out.”

Excerpted from an article by Briana Grzybowski first published in The Tennessee Register.

Commonwealth Catholic Charities Blesses and Dedicates New Building



On December 16, 2014, the Most Reverend Francis Xavier DiLorenzo, Bishop of Richmond, presided at a blessing of Commonwealth Catholic Charities’ (CCC) new office building in Richmond, Virginia. Bishop DiLorenzo offered a special blessing and thank you to staff and volunteers for everything they do to help the most vulnerable in our communities. The ribbon cutting honors were performed by Joanne Natrass, CCC’s executive director, who thanked everyone for participating in the celebration and commended those who help to make the agency’s work possible.

This blessing was followed by a dedication of the building in early March in honor of Edward McNamara Smith. Ed, CCC’s chief development officer for over eight years, passed away in December 2013, before the 36,000 square-foot building was completed. Edward’s family initiated the “Edward McNamara Smith” fund to help cover the costs of the new building.

At the building dedication, Mrs. Natrass remembered Ed as one of those remarkable people we meet in life who leaves a lasting impression on the hearts of others. A plaque in his memory describes Ed as a “trusted colleague, fundraiser, mentor, dedicated husband, father, brother and valued friend.” His widow, Rita, challenged those gathered to sustain her late husband’s work and legacy by contributing to the building fund and CCC’s essential services.

CCC’s new building is 50 percent larger than its previous space, has an expanded food pantry, significantly more group meeting rooms for counseling, English language classes and other support programs for clients, a computer lab for refugees, play therapy rooms and space reserved for a chapel. This space also is on the bus line and has adequate parking for all CCC visitors and staff. Clients, staff and volunteers have expressed great enthusiasm for the new space.

Fort Worth Receives \$1 Million Grant for Stay the Course

The Justin Foundation recently awarded Catholic Charities Fort Worth a \$1.021 million grant to support an expansion of their Stay the Course research project. This project is a

partnership with the University of Notre Dame’s Lab for Economic Opportunities, studying the impact of case management on community college drop out rates. The expansion grant will allow case management services to be provided at an additional community college campus over the next two to four years.

Catholic Charities in Albany Raises \$50,000 for Soup Kitchen and Pantry



Mardi Gras was more than a party and the kick-off to Lent. This year, Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Albany raised a record-breaking \$51,000 for an inner-city program that serves residents in need. The Sister Maureen Joyce Center, named for the former CEO of Catholic Charities, is a soup kitchen and food pantry operating in the West Hill neighborhood of Albany. The center is a collaboration between Catholic Charities, Congregation Beth Emeth and Blessed Sacrament Parish. Over 1,200 people are served each month by the center. This year’s event honored Alba Giordano and Blessed Sacrament Parish in Albany. All proceeds from the event went to support the center.

Cleveland’s Migration and Refugee Services Honored as “Pro Bono Hero”

The American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA), the national as-

sociation of more than 13,500 attorneys and law professors who practice and teach immigration law, has selected the Migration and Refugee Services (MRS) programs of Catholic Charities, Diocese of Cleveland as the Winter 2014/2015 AILA Pro Bono Heroes Honoree for its Northeast Region.

AILA recognized Catholic Charities/MRS for its work “to provide access to justice for lesser-served and vulnerable members of the immigrant population and promote pro bono service among the private bar. Catholic Charities/MRS helps facilitate assistance state wide, and has actively coordinated legal assistance in response to the surge in the Juvenile and Family dockets. Catholic Charities/MRS has arranged pro bono attorneys, legal interns, and interpreters to be present at all Juvenile and Family dockets. Many non-profit agencies have risen to this task in response to the border surge of 2014. What is notable about the assistance provided by Catholic Charities/MRS is that they have managed to provide this invaluable assistance while grieving the untimely loss of an honored and valued member of their team. Immigration attorney Sala Gembala died unexpectedly in August 2014, leaving a loving husband, toddler son, infant daughter, grieving family, friends and co-workers. It is a testament to Sala’s memory that her agency and colleagues banded together in the face of this inexplicable tragedy. They continue to honor Sala by ensuring access to justice and safeguarding legal assistance for the most vulnerable, and we applaud them for their dedication to this cause.”

“We are incredibly humbled to receive this prestigious honor from AILA,” says Camille Gill, managing attorney of MRS. “It is a testament to the important work we do for immigrants and refugees throughout the region, and a wonderful way to honor the work of Sala Gembala, who continues to inspire us all.”

Central Colorado Agency Welcomes New President and CEO



Andy Barton became president and CEO of Catholic Charities of Central Colorado on January 12. Before that, Mr. Barton was vice president of development for Penrose-St. Francis Health Foundation, where he helped increase philanthropic support for the hospital by over \$7 million in four years. Additionally, he helped provide temporary leadership for the St. Thomas More Health Foundation and worked with Centura Health Physicians Group in the area of strategic development. Prior to his role as vice president of development, he served as interim president for the Penrose-St. Francis Health Foundation from September 2012 to January 2013 and as director of annual giving from October 2010 to September 2012. He also served as executive director of the YMCA of the Pikes Peak Region Tri-Lakes Family Center for seven years.

During that time, he was responsible for bringing YMCA staff and the Tri-Lakes community together to fund-raise and build the Tri-Lakes Family Center, which opened in 2008.

“We couldn’t be more pleased with the selection of Andy as the new president and CEO of Catholic Charities. We are impressed with his qualifications and his ties to our community. We know he will make great contributions to our organization,” said Tom Naughton, chairman of the Catholic Charities Board of Directors.

Barton said, “I am excited to join the team of dedicated and talented staff and volunteers at Catholic Charities in their work with our poor and vulnerable brothers and sisters. It is an honor to be a part of building on the agency’s ministry and legacy of service.”

Catholic Charities West Virginia Launches SNAP Enrollment Program

Catholic Charities West Virginia (CCWVa) announced the launch of a free program designed to assist people in applying for the USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Recently CCWVa was awarded the first USDA SNAP Outreach Grant for West Virginia. This grant, along with funding as a subgrantee of the CCUSA-Walmart Foundation grant, will enable CCWVa to expand its efforts to educate West Virginia families about the SNAP program and provide eligible families with enrollment assistance.

CCWVa Executive Director Mark Sliter-Hays, said, “If one person

is going hungry, that is one too many. We will continue to help West Virginians access the help they need to keep food on their tables and to keep from falling through the cracks.”

West Virginians who visit a CCWVa outreach office or call their toll-free number will receive a personal, confidential screening to determine their eligibility for this important benefit. Assistance in completing the application for the program also is available. In addition, they may be connected to other services that are offered in their area such as assistance paying their utility bills, eviction notice payments and food pantries.

According to data from Foodshare, SNAP is one of the most effective and efficient ways to end hunger in the state. SNAP benefits provide many needy families with vital assistance in providing nutritious and healthy meals to their families and freeing resources for other necessary expenses. Unfortunately, a large number of families eligible for this benefit are not aware of this critical resource or their eligibility. Support from the CCUSA-Walmart Foundation grant and USDA will help CCWVa to close this gap through outreach and enrollment assistance.

Ground Breaking and Blessing for St. Michael’s Haven Housing



On April 17, Catholic Charities Walla Walla in the Diocese of Spokane, Washington, hosted the ground breaking and blessing of the St. Michael the Archangel Haven, a new facility that will provide housing to homeless veterans and homeless veterans’ families.

In October 2011, Catholic Charities responded to a Request for Proposals for an Extended Use Lease (EUL) for a portion of the Walla Walla VA Medical Campus. Catholic Charities was chosen as developer for the EUL based on a proposal to create an affordable 40-unit community for homeless veterans and homeless veterans’ families. Twenty-four of the proposed units will be provided through the adaptive reuse of the four officers’ quarters buildings with an additional 16 units newly constructed on property adjacent to the historic officers’ quarters. The goal is to provide housing for many single-member households in one-bedroom units as well as providing housing opportunities for families in two- and three-bedroom units.

St. Michael’s Haven will offer service-enriched units providing support, respect, compassion and dignity to those who are so often forgotten. St. Michael’s Haven is a project of Catholic Housing of Eastern Washington, Heylman Martin Architects and Garco Construction.

Catholic Charities in Wilmington Receives \$1 Million Matching Grant

In gratitude for receiving the Msgr. Thomas Reese Award from Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Wilmington at its Annual Tribute Dinner on April

15, and in recognition of the 185th Anniversary of Catholic Charities service to the Diocese of Wilmington, Rocco and Mary Abessinio gave a very special and generous gift to Catholic Charities—the establishment of the St. Rocco Fund for Catholic Charities. This fund will provide a dollar for dollar match from the Abessinio Family Foundation for all donations received until July 15, 2015, up to \$1 million. Donations to the fund will be used to support all Catholic Charities programs, provided to all regardless of religion, race or ability to pay.

Abessinio credited his devotion to St. Rocco as the inspiration for their creation of the fund. Born of nobility in the fourteenth century, St. Rocco followed the example of St. Francis of Assisi and distributed all his worldly goods among the poor. The couple is using the creation of the fund to inspire others to share their resources with the most vulnerable.

“We are thrilled to benefit from the generosity of the Abessinio Family Foundation, and especially Rocco and Mary Abessinio. Their desire to share their resources with the most vulnerable in our communities is truly inspiring,” said Richelle Vible, executive director of Catholic Charities.

Catholic Charities celebrates its 185th anniversary of serving those in need during 2015. The agency offers a wide range of services to strengthen families, care for children, assist the disadvantaged and build human relationships throughout Delaware and the Eastern Shore of Maryland.

Kansas City-St. Joseph Agency Moves Into Its New Home

“Welcome to Catholic Charities.” This simple sentence is the first thing people hear when they walk through the doors of Catholic Charities of Kansas City-St. Joseph, which moved into its new downtown home at 850 Main Street in January. And while the agency continues to offer core services and focused programs that move people out of poverty, signs are everywhere that new and exciting things are happening.

“The first thing people will notice is the big lighted sign out front. There’s no mistaking when you see that green steeple we’re here to serve, and here to stay,” said Deacon Dan Powers, CEO of Catholic Charities of Kansas City-St. Joseph. When people walk in, staff members greet them in the Welcome Center and help them feel comfortable.

“It’s a brave decision to walk up those steps to our front door and come in to ask for assistance,” said Director of Education and Support Ashley Wohlgemuth. “Our first task is to put people at ease, and then we figure out together how to move forward.”

Right now, about 16 percent of Missouri’s population lives in poverty. In Kansas City alone, that’s nearly 80,000 people. Jamie, a 36-year-old woman, is one of them. She came to 850 Main in need of food and clothing.

“This is my first time coming here, anywhere really, for help,” she said. “Someone came right up to me and asked what I needed. We just talked

about the things going on in my life. I had to move out of my old place fast, and I didn’t have any clothes with me. So I got a coat and jeans today, some food, and I’m coming back to get help finding a job. It feels pretty good, especially at a time when things are going so bad in my life.”

Visitors with urgent needs like Jamie’s can select clothes from donations in the St. Francis Shop. Non-perishable food and hygiene items are stored on a lower level. But the space at 850 Main is also uniquely designed to offer more lasting solutions to poverty.

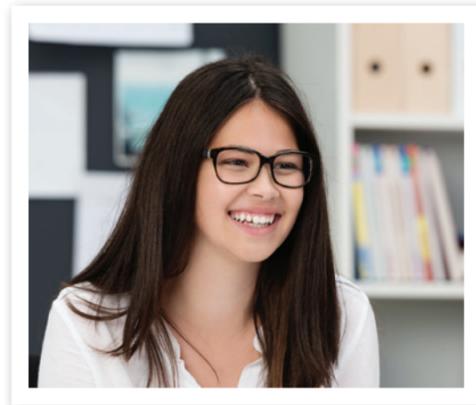
In the Workforce Development lab, for example, clients learn job search skills, create resumes and receive support from other job-seekers and coaches.

“Workforce Development is a vital service we offer every client because finding a job that pays a living wage is one of the fastest paths out of poverty,” Program Director Jan Motl said. “Looking for work can be difficult, but our classes show people they truly are employable.”

The 45,000 square foot building offers room to grow housing, health, and education and support services. It also gives the agency space to add new services as the community’s needs change and grow.

“Catholic Charities marked its 135th anniversary in 2014. Now, we’re starting a new chapter. We’re blessed to be in our new home,” Powers said. “Here we can touch the poor in an even greater way.” ■

PROVIDING HELP. CREATING HOPE.



Victoriana was 5 years old when she saw her father gunned down in front of her home in Honduras. The blood-tinged image has haunted her for ten years. But now she is talking about this traumatic event thanks to new bilingual mental health counseling sessions provided by Catholic Charities Southwestern Ohio at Dater High School in Cincinnati.

About 40 students from Central America have enrolled in this west side school in recent months. Adolescence is challenging for most teens, but these students come to school with extra burdens. Many traveled for weeks to arrive at the U.S. border, only to be detained even longer before traveling to reunite with family in Cincinnati. Most traveled alone, unable to speak English.

More than 63,000 unaccompanied children from Central America crossed the southern border of Texas between October 2013 and August 2014. More than 200 of them are living in the most populated county of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.

In addition to learning English skills, these students must overcome cultural barriers. Little things, like eating lunch, are different. In Central America, students leave school to have their lunch of tortillas and beans with family. Adjusting to an uninterrupted school day and an American-style meal is difficult. Also, the students may encounter a different family structure. While many students have been reunited with their families here, others have left behind mothers, fathers, grandparents, brothers and sisters. These are just a few of the new stressors facing teens like Victoriana.

Many of the students Catholic Charities counselor Patrick Reynolds-Berry sees at Dater have mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, adjustment disorders or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Some suffered violence first hand. Every experience is different and every one of the teens faces different challenges.

In Victoriana's case, she's terrified of being sent back to Honduras where she was subjected to death threats. She also is getting reacquainted with a mother she hasn't seen since her mother fled their home country after her father's death.

"She's had a lot of trauma and no one to talk to about it until now. The fact that she is opening up and doing so well shows how resilient she is," said Reynolds-Berry. "She's like so many of the kids I see who improve through education and therapy. It blows me away how strong these students are. Still, kids like Victoriana worry about being deported."

Catholic Charities Southwestern Ohio offers free counseling sessions once a week to Victoriana and six of her classmates. The agency also receives referrals from another high school serving unaccompanied minors. The counseling helps these students strengthen their mental health, even as they wait for their fate to be decided. ■

Through the support of donors and volunteers, Catholic Charities Southwestern Ohio is establishing a legal services team to assist these children with the resolution of their legal status. To read firsthand accounts of their flight toward freedom visit <https://ccswoh.org/media/news/>.

CALENDAR

2015 TRAINING & EVENTS

May 30-June 13

The O'Grady Institute
Germany and Italy
Kathy Brown
kbrown@CatholicCharitiesUSA.org

June 13-19

Leadership Institute
Lutz, Fla.
Kristina Asifo
kasifo@CatholicCharitiesUSA.org

August 10-12

New Diocesan Directors Inst.
Alexandria, Va.
Kristan Schlichte
kschlichte@CatholicCharitiesUSA.org

August 16-20

Social Venture Boot Camp
Notre Dame, Ind.
Maria Gonzales
mgonzales@CatholicCharitiesUSA.org

September 10-12

Annual Gathering
Omaha, Neb.
Amy Stinger
astinger@CatholicCharitiesUSA.org

October 2-3

CCUSA Social Ministry Regional Gathering
Houston, Texas
Tina Baldera
tbaldera@CatholicCharitiesUSA.org

November 2-6

Applied Institute for Disaster Excellence
Little Rock, Ark.
Fani Cruz
fcruz@CatholicCharitiesUSA.org

2015 Training and Events

For more information on upcoming events, please visit our website!
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